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THE HAPPY WARRIOR
ALFRED E. SMITH

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ALFRED E. SMITH

A Study of a Public Servant

BY
FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT



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FOREWORD

It is difficult, in the tumult of a political campaign, to set forth facts without bias, but I have tried, in the first part of this little book, to analyze fairly some of the causes that make Alfred E. Smith one of the most interesting Americans of this generation. In no way is this written as a partisan plea. The excuse lies in the deluge of letters coming to me from men and women in every circumstance of life, and from every part of the United States, asking every conceivable kind of question about him.

Legend is already forming, and many people are being swayed by the usual inventions of friend and foe which unfortunately accompany our Presidential contests. There are, nevertheless, many others who are wise enough to disregard the frothy antagonisms

and to seek honest information on which to formulate honest opinion.

In the second part is included the address placing Governor Smith in nomination before the Democratic National Convention at Houston, Texas, in June, 1928.

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

HYDE PARK, DUTCHESS COUNTY, N.Y.

August 25, 1928

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ALFRED E. SMITH

I
PREPARATION

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I

PREPARATION

WHEN the mental growth of a man in public life ceases, he ought, for the sake of the community, to retire. Most of our mediocre or unsuccessful Presidents were slipping downhill mentally before they took office. Lincoln, Cleveland, Roosevelt, Wilson, and Coolidge broadened and strengthened as the years went by.

By the same token, some men, unused to politics, become mere politicians when elevated to high office, while other men, brought up in the game of politics, rise superior to their environment.

When I first knew Alfred E. Smith, he was a politician. Early in January, 1911, a

small group of Senators and Assemblymen met in Albany to oppose the election by the Legislature of the Tammany candidate for the United States Senatorship. We believed that we had the unmistakable backing of our respective districts, but we were nearly all serving our first term, and knew little of procedure. A party caucus had been called. We expected to be defeated on the vote, and had been told that a caucus was in theory binding on those who took part in it. Some one said, 'Ask Assemblyman Smith, the majority leader; he never tries to fool anybody.'

So we went to the leader of the forces opposed to us and got this answer, 'Boys, I want you to go into the caucus, and if you go in, you're bound by the action of the majority. That's party law. But if you're serious about this fight, keep your hands clean and stay out. Then you're free agents.' We stayed out, and won the fight; and incidentally we won, also, the definite know-

ledge that Smith would play square with friend and foe alike.

That legislative session started Smith up the ladder. In his previous years in the Assembly, as a member of the minority party, he had shown little inclination to independent action; but while constructive thought was at a discount he had, as was disclosed later, been giving deep study to the laws and government of his State.

When, in 1911, the Legislature became Democratic for the first time in many years, with young men from Tammany Hall largely in control, the State was treated to the surprise of a large number of progressive measures of legislation. Mixed up with the usual run of wholly partisan measures were proposals for sound steps in social reform — factory laws, workmen's compensation, the protection of women and children in industry. Responsibility for the enactment of these and similar laws devolved upon Smith

as majority leader, and then as Speaker of the Assembly.

It was during this period that a Republican, the head of one of the great non-partisan organizations devoted to social and governmental reform, said to me: 'That man Smith and the younger crowd with him represent a new spirit in Tammany Hall. They are organization followers, of course, but they seem to have discovered that there is something more important than ward picnics and balls.'

Smith was lucky, and not for the first or the last time. Instead of having to revert to a post in the minority, under four years of Republican control, he was sent as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention of 1915. The great approval which he there won from such men as Root, Wickersham, and Stimson demonstrated that he was not only still growing mentally, but that during the years of legislative politics, he had

grasped the theories and fundamentals of constitutional and administrative law. This was followed by a useful practical experience of three years, in administering the offices of Sheriff and of President of the Board of Aldermen in New York City.

The Smith of 1918 was very different from the Smith of 1905. This might be called the first formative period of his growth.

Those times were significant of a vast change in American political thought. They were the days of reform, of muckraking, of the advancement of new ideas, like woman's suffrage, recall of judges, prohibition, initiative and referendum, old-age pensions, and labor legislation. They brought bitter party splits and party alignments which were by no means clear or permanent.

Through them Smith emerged with what Woodrow Wilson would have called 'liberal thought.' He was on the side of the progressives in the fields of legislation and of con-

stitutional law, but he made it clear that he based action on fundamentals and not on temporary expediency. He knew enough of the practical side of life to waste little time in seeking the impossible, or in scattering his energies in behalf of causes in which general public interest could not be aroused.

Utterly different in so many ways, yet there is between Theodore Roosevelt and Alfred E. Smith an extraordinary similarity of political method. To get what one can, fight for it, but not jeopardize it by asking for the moon, brought concrete results to both of them. This similarity accounts, perhaps, for the same type of blind devotion accorded them by many of their friends.

In June, 1918, President Wilson asked me whether I would accede to the request of a number of New York City organization leaders to be the candidate for the Governorship. As my departure for European waters on Navy business was imminent, I could

not run, and the President discussed with me the names of other candidates who had been suggested. At the end of the conversation, Wilson said, in substance what he later wrote: 'I should be entirely satisfied with the nomination of Smith. He seems to me to be a man who has responded in an extraordinary manner to the awakening forces of a new day, and the compulsion of changing circumstances. He seems to have noteworthy support from organizations and individuals of both parties who are working in one way or another for the improvement of government.' That was a Republican year, and most of us expected the defeat of Alfred E. Smith, candidate for Governor. Many of the old-time leaders were certain that no Catholic could be elected. In view of some of the events of 1928, it is interesting to look back to that summer and autumn of 1918. With two million young Americans of every creed taking part in the final strug-

gle in Europe, religious prejudice remained very much under cover; Smith was elected Governor. Four times since then he has been a candidate for the same office, and that first example of keeping religion out of politics has, thank God, been followed in every succeeding campaign in his own State.

It is an exceedingly easy thing for a Governor or a President to go along with the drift of the tide, to veto vicious legislation, to give honest administration, to lead a perfectly peaceful life, and to avoid criticism or attack. Of such are the hundreds of forgotten Governors and the dozens of Presidents whom we have to look up in a history book.

I am not one of those who subscribe to the thought that elections are carried by the voters who are voting against something. Smith's elections as Governor refute that old belief. In every year he has appealed

to the electorate, not as an opponent of measures, but as a proponent of a constructive programme. It was historically an almost impossible task to pass a constitutional amendment or a bond issue in New York State by popular vote. Smith has come forward, in election after election during the past ten years, to ask approval of new measures of this kind. In almost every instance he has been beaten at the start, and, frankly, I have personally felt, on several occasions, that he would go down to inevitable defeat.

To ask people to approve a fifty-million-dollar bond issue for State parks is daring; to follow it up with a request for a hundred million to eliminate grade crossings, and then for another hundred million for public buildings, prisons, and hospitals might be called foolhardy.

Probably the Smith of the early days in the Assembly would have viewed the short

ballot amendment with fear, and would have thought of the loss of many fat jobs which would result from the amendment providing for the consolidation of one hundred and sixty-five State Departments into eighteen. However, the Smith as Governor has kept on growing, and with that growth has come that faith in him and his proposals which has made popular ratification of all these measures so overwhelming.

Sometimes a man makes a reputation, deserved or otherwise, by a single action. It is rare for any public servant to fight against odds in behalf of constructive proposals, and to win in literally dozens of instances. The relationship between an executive and a legislature is, in many ways, the criterion of success, whether it be in the Governorship or the Presidency. That is where personality means much to the progress of the State or the Nation. Theodore Roosevelt, especially during his

earlier years as President, succeeded in passing great constructive measures, often against the personal desires of an unsympathetic Congress. President Taft did not have the temperament either to dominate or to work with his Congress. The first six years of President Wilson brought out again the qualities of constructive leadership. It is difficult to characterize the administrations of President Harding and President Coolidge in the same way.

I do not think that I am letting myself be influenced by partisanship when I express the feeling that since the war national politics in this country has been on a level almost incredibly low. We have, as a nation, the cynical attitude of being willing to let almost any individual or group run our National Government so long as they do not interfere with our pastime or our prosperity.

If New York State had been run that

way since 1918, we never should have heard of Governor Smith, nor would that State be, as it is to-day, a model constantly copied by other States, because of its progressive legislation and administration.

‘But,’ people ask me, ‘what has the ability of Smith as Governor to do with his availability for the Presidency?’

The answer is twofold. First, most of our successful Presidents of the past have had little or no experience as office-holders under the Federal Government. In other words, success in the Presidency has not been predicated on previous national service. Secondly, Governor Smith has a far greater understanding of national and international problems than even most of his friends imagine. One is apt to forget that during a constant personal contact with public affairs during twenty-three years, it is inevitable that he has acquired a large fund of knowledge of governmental problems outside of

the confines of his own State. This has been proved by a dozen instances of men who, during the past few months, have journeyed to discuss national problems with him and have come back and said to me, 'He knew just as much and more about the problem than I did.'

So, also, with the relationship between the United States and foreign nations. I remember well that, before undertaking an active part in the 1924 pre-convention campaign, I had a long talk with the Governor in regard to foreign policy. The question of American membership in the League of Nations was not then an active one, but the Governor displayed both a great familiarity with the practical humanitarian accomplishments of the League, and also a good understanding of how the United States could help in a practical way in the further development of these humanitarian and peace-making activities without involving us in purely European political problems.

Again Governor Smith reminds me of Theodore Roosevelt in his instinctive method of stripping the shell of verbiage and extraneous matter from any problem and of then presenting it as a definite programme which any one can understand. When the country had been engaged for years in a wordy controversy as to whether an inter-oceanic canal should be built at Nicaragua or Panama, President Roosevelt said to Congress and the Nation: 'We all need and want a canal. Here are the engineering reports. Now go ahead and build one.' I have been reminded of that episode by the paragraph in the Governor's speech of acceptance which deals with the problem of a ship canal from the Great Lakes to the Atlantic. He says: 'As Governor of New York, I have heretofore expressed a preference for the all-American route, basing my view on engineers' reports made to me. The correctness of these reports and also of those favoring the

St. Lawrence route has been challenged. As President of the United States, therefore, it would be my clear duty to restudy this question impartially upon engineers' reports the accuracy of which must be above question. When the results of such a study are given to Congress, I am entirely willing to abide by the decision of Congress.'

It is the memory of dozens of cases where the Governor has sought a concrete accomplishment, and obtained it, that makes many believe that the same qualities would prove effective in the give-and-take of Washington life, and the fact that he has had long years of legislative experience makes it probable that he would work with Congress instead of trying to browbeat Congress or drift into a hopeless deadlock.

At the same time, when coöperation with the legislative branch of the Government has failed, he has used the weapon of popular appeal so effectively that he has attained his

end. I like a paragraph in one of his recent speeches: 'Of all men I have reason to believe that the people can and do grasp the problems of the Government. Against the opposition of the self-seeker and the partisan, again and again, I have seen legislation won by the pressure of popular demand, exerted after the people had had an honest, frank, and complete explanation of the issues. That direct contact with the people I propose to continue in this campaign, and, if I am elected, in the conduct of the Nation's affairs.' Any one who knows Governor Smith will recognize that this is no empty boast.

These are some of the reasons that give me the feeling that Governor Smith has passed, successfully, through what might be termed the second period of preparation. He has now been active in the larger field of public service for ten years, with the result that he is everywhere recognized as belong-

ing in the top rank of the practical experts in Government service.

Two more personal qualities are worth considering. First, in the matter of his appointments to public office, it would have been an easy matter to have followed the usual rule of filling the executive offices around him in accordance with the machine-made recommendations of the local political leaders of his own party. From his first inauguration as Governor his appointees have been chosen for their ability to get things done right. They have come from Republican as well as Democratic sources, and they have made good.

A few years ago a local political leader came to the Governor to complain most bitterly because the head of one of the technical State departments had discharged a supernumerary watchman on the canal. The Governor made it so clear that he would support the interest of the State rather than that of

the political machine that this leader said to me later: 'What's the use? You can't fool Al; he has the facts, and even though he made all my boys back home sore, we've got to admit he's right, and for every vote he loses by being stiff-necked he'll pick up five votes from people who never supported a Democrat in all their lives.'

Finally, there is the man himself — the man in his home when the work of the day is done. Perhaps my personal regard for him is based on an inborn feeling for those grown-ups who have not wholly grown up, for the spirit of fun and of play that we see in a very few of our older friends. It would be hard to find a happier type of American family life than that of the Governor; it is the kind that is stimulating to all who have seen it, for it combines straight living and family affection with jest and play and song. High official position calls for dignity and simplicity, and these qualities are present in the Governor's public and private life.

When the book of this generation is closed, it will record the very definite influence of that distinctively American product, Alfred E. Smith. It has been, and is, an influence against sham and fraud and intolerance and selfish apathy. He has stimulated thousands by his own example of high-minded service and by a personality which has compelled attention. He has continued to grow. He has proved that government is best conducted by a human being and not by a machine.

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PRESENTATION

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II PRESENTATION

ADDRESS NOMINATING GOVERNOR SMITH AT
THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION
IN HOUSTON, JUNE, 1928

I COME for the third time to urge upon a convention of my party, the nomination of the Governor of the State of New York. The faith which I held I still hold. It has been justified in the achievement. The whole country now has learned the measure of his greatness.

During another four years his every act has been under the searchlight of friend and foe, and he has not been found wanting. Slowly, surely, the proper understanding of this man has spread from coast to coast, from North to South. Most noteworthy is this fact, that the understanding of his stature has been spread by no paid propa-

ganda, by no effort on his part to do other than devote his time, his head, and his heart to the duties of his high office and the welfare of the State. His most uncompromising opponent will not deny that he has achieved an unprecedented popularity among the people of this country. He is well called 'the Pathfinder to the open road for all true lovers of Humanity.'

It is, however, not my belief that I should urge popularity as the criterion in making our choice. A higher obligation falls upon us. We must, first of all, make sure that our nominee possesses the unusual qualifications called for by the high office of President of these United States. Mere party expediency must be subservient to national good. We are Americans even before we are Democrats.

What sort of President do we need to-day? A man, I take it, who has four great characteristics, every one of them an essential to

the office. First of all, leadership — articulate, virile — willing to bear responsibility, needing no official spokesman to interpret the oracle. Next, experience, that does not guess, but knows from long practice the science of governing, which is a very different thing from mere technical bureau organizing. Then honesty — the honesty that hates hypocrisy and cannot live with concealment and deceit.

Last, and, in this time, most vital, that rare ability to make popular government function as it was intended to by the Fathers, to reverse the present trend toward apathy and arouse in the citizenship an active interest — a willingness to reassume its share of responsibility for the Nation's progress. So only can we have once more a government, not just for the people, but by the people also.

History gives us confident assurance that a man who has displayed these qualities as

a great Governor of a State, has invariably carried them with him to become a great President. Look back over our list of Presidents since the war between the States, when our rapid growth made our Nation's business an expert's task. Who stand out as our great Presidents? New York gave to us Grover Cleveland teaching in Albany that public office is a public trust; Theodore Roosevelt preaching the doctrine of the square deal for all; Virginia and New Jersey gave to us that pioneer of fellowship between nations, our great leader, Woodrow Wilson.

Let us measure our present Governor by those standards. Personal leadership is a fundamental of successful government. I do not mean the leadership of the band of good fellows and good schemers who followed President Harding, nor the purely perfunctory party loyalty which has part of the time in part of the country sustained the

present Chief Executive. I mean that leadership which, by sheer force of mind, by chain of unanswerable logic, has brought friends and foes alike to enact vitally needed measures of government reform.

His staunchest political adversaries concede the Governor's unique and unparalleled record of constructive achievement in the total reorganization of the machinery of government, in the business-like management of State finance, in the enactment of a legislative programme for the protection of men, women, and children engaged in industry, in the improvement of the public health, and in the attainment of the finest standard of public service in the interest of humanity. This he has accomplished by a personality of vibrant, many-sided appeal, which has swept along with it a legislature of a different political faith.

During the past month alone, the Republican-controlled Congress of the United

States repeatedly passed important bills over the veto of a Republican President. During eight years at Albany the wisdom of every veto by a Democratic Governor has been sustained by a Republican Legislature. In the same way the fitness of his appointments has been recognized and confirmed without exception by a hostile Republican State Senate, whereas a friendly Federal Senate has on occasion after occasion rejected the nominations sent in by its titular party leader.

The second great need is experience. By this I refer not merely to length of time in office — I mean that practical understanding which comes from the long and thoughtful study of, and daily dealings with, the basic principles involved in the science of taxation, of social welfare, of industrial legislation, of governmental budgets and administration, of penology, of legislative procedure and practice, of constitutional law.

In all these matters the Governor of New York has developed himself into an expert, recognized and consulted by men and women of all parties. In any conference of scholars on these subjects he takes his place naturally as a trained and efficient specialist. He also possesses that most unusual quality of selecting appointees, not only skilled in the theoretical side of their work, but able to give the highest administrative success to their task. The high standard of the appointees of the Governor, their integrity, their ability, has made strong appeal to the citizens of his State, urban and rural, regardless of party. I add 'rural' advisedly, for each succeeding gubernatorial election has shown for him even greater proportional gains in the agricultural sections than in the large communities.

As one who served his State in the Legislature of which this Governor was then also a member, and who later for nearly eight

years held an administrative post under President Wilson at Washington, I can bear witness that the problems which confront the Governor of New York and those national problems which confront the President at Washington differ chiefly in geographic extent and not in the fundamentals of political principle. The Governor's study of the needs of his own State has given him deep insight into similar problems of other States and also of their application to the machinery and the needs of the Federal Government. In the last analysis a matter of administrative reform, of industrial betterment, of the regulation of public carriers, of the development of natural resources, of the retention of the ownership of primary water-power in the people, of the improvement of the lot of the farmer, differs little, whether the problem occur in Albany, in Spokane, in Atlanta, or in Washington.

How well the people of his State have

understood and approved the wise solution of these questions is best shown by the fact that he has been elected and reëlected, and reëlected, and again elected Governor by huge majorities in the hundreds of thousands — in a normally Republican State.

Now, as to the requisite of honesty. I do not mean an honesty that merely keeps a man out of jail, or an honesty that, while avoiding personal smirch, hides the corruption of others. I speak of that honesty that lets a man sleep well of nights, fearing no Senatorial investigation, that honesty that demands faithfulness to the public trust in every public servant, that honesty which takes immediate action to correct abuse.

The whole story of his constant and persistent efforts to insure the practice of the spirit as well as the letter of official and private probity in public places is so well understood by the voters of his State that more and more Republicans vote for him

every time he is attacked. This is a topic which need not be enlarged upon. The voting public of the Nation is fully wise enough to compare the ethical standards of official Albany with those of official Washington.

And now, last of all, and where the Governor excels over all the political leaders of this day, comes the ability to interest the people in the mechanics of their governmental machinery, to take the engine apart and show the function of each wheel.

Power to impart knowledge of, and create interest in government is the crying need of our time. The soul of our country, lulled by mere material prosperity, has passed through eight gray years.

Our people must not acquiesce in the easy thought of being mere passengers so long as the drivers and mechanics do not disturb our comfort. We must be concerned over our destination, not merely satisfied that the passing scenery is pleasant to the eye. We

must be interested in whether that national destination be heaven or hell and not content that the man at the wheel has assured us that we shall there find a full bank account and a soft bed.

In an era of the ready-made we must not accept ready-made government; in a day of high-powered advertising we must not fall for the false statements of the most highly organized propaganda ever developed by the owners of the Republican Party. We do not want to change these United Sovereign States of America into the 'United States, Incorporated,' with a limited and self-perpetuating board of directors and no voting power in the common stockholders.

This is a time of national danger unless America can be roused again to wakefulness. I say this in no spirit of the demagogue, in no wish to attack the legitimate course of the life or business of our citizens. I see only one hope of a return to that participation

by the people in their government which hitherto marked us out as the great outstanding success among democratic republics.

That hope lies in the personality of the new man at the wheel, and especially in his purpose to arouse the spirit of interest and the desire to participate.

The Governor of the State of New York stands out to-day as having that purpose, as having proved during these same eight years not only his desire, but his power to make the people as interested in their government as he is himself.

I have described, so far, qualities entirely of the mind — the mental and moral equipment without which no President can successfully meet the administrative and material problems of his office. It is possible with only these qualities for a man to be a reasonably efficient President, but there is one thing more needed to make him a great

President. It is that quality of soul which makes a man loved by little children, by dumb animals, that quality of soul which makes him a strong help to all those in sorrow or in trouble, that quality which makes him not merely admired, but loved by all the people — the quality of sympathetic understanding of the human heart, of real interest in one's fellow men. Instinctively he senses the popular need because he himself has lived through the hardship, the labor, and the sacrifice which must be endured by every man of heroic mould who struggles up to eminence from obscurity and low estate. Between him and the people is that subtle bond which makes him their champion and makes them enthusiastically trust him with their loyalty and their love.

Our two greatest Presidents of modern times possessed this quality to an unusual degree. It was, indeed, what above all made them great. It was Lincoln's human heart,

and Woodrow Wilson's passionate desire to bring about the happiness of the whole world which will be the best remembered by the historians of a hundred years from now. It is what is so conspicuously lacking in our present administration, a lack which has been at the bottom of the growing dislike and even hatred of the other nations toward us. For without this love and understanding of his fellow men, no Chief Executive can win for his land that international friendship which is alone the sure foundation of lasting peace.

Because of his power of leadership, because of his unequalled knowledge of the science of government, because of his uncompromising honesty, because of his ability to bring the government home to the people, there is no doubt that our Governor will make an 'efficient' President, but it is because he also possesses, to a superlative degree, this rare faculty of sympathetic understand-

ing, I prophesy that he will also make a great President, and because of this I further prophesy that he will again place us among the nations of the world as a country which values its ideals as much as its material prosperity — a land that has no selfish designs on any weaker power, a land the ideal and inspiration of all those who dream a kinder, happier civilization in the days to come.

If the vision of real world peace, of the abolishment of war, ever comes true, it will not be through the mere mathematical calculations of a reduction of armament programme nor the platitudes of multilateral treaties piously deprecating armed conflict. It will be because this Nation will select as its head a leader who understands the human side of life, who has the force of character and the keenness of brain to take, instinctively, the right course and the real course toward a prosperity that will be more than

material, a leader also who grasps and understands not only large affairs of business and government, but in an equal degree the aspirations and the needs of the individual, the farmer, the wage-earner — the great mass of average citizens who make up the backbone of our Nation.

America needs not only an administrator, but a leader — a pathfinder, a blazer of the trail to the high road that will avoid the bottomless morass of crass materialism that has engulfed so many of the great civilizations of the past. It is the privilege of Democracy not only to offer such a man, but to offer him as the surest leader to victory. To stand upon the ramparts and die for our principles is heroic. To sally forth to battle and win for our principles is something more than heroic. We offer one who has the will to win — who not only deserves success, but commands it. Victory is his habit — the happy warrior — Alfred E. Smith.

